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221327Z Jan 02

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	WHA-00	DS-00
	EAP-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	VCE-00	M-00	NSAE-00
	SSO-00	SS-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/002W

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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0753  
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY  
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000200

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF A/S KANSTEINER AND DAS BELLAMY

NSC FOR SENIOR DIRECTOR FRAZER

PARIS FOR NEARY

LONDON FOR GURNEY

NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/12

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: OBASANJO SHUTTLES TO ZIMBABWE, MEETS BOTH  
MUGABE AND TSVANGIRAI

CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF MATT HARRINGTON.  
REASONS: 1.5 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

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[1](#)1. (C) NIGERIAN PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO MADE A WHIRLWIND VISIT TO ZIMBABWE, ARRIVING JANUARY 20 AT 8:00 P.M. AND DEPARTING AT 3:00 A.M. THE NEXT DAY. HE MET WITH BOTH PRESIDENT ROBERT MUGABE AND THE MDC'S MORGAN TSVANGIRAI. ACCORDING TO THE NIGERIAN EMBASSY, OBASANJO MET ALONE WITH MUGABE. ALTHOUGH SPECIFIC DETAILS OF THEIR CONVERSATION ARE NOT AVAILABLE, THE NIGERIANS SAID HE RAISED THE ABUJA AGREEMENT, THE NEED TO ENSURE A LEVEL AND NON-VIOLENT ELECTORAL PLAYING FIELD, AND THE PRESENCE OF INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS FROM THE EU, COMMONWEALTH AND OTHER ENTITIES. OBASANJO LATER TOLD TSVANGIRAI HE WAS MORE OPTIMISTIC AFTER TALKING WITH MUGABE, WHO HAD "PROVIDED ASSURANCES" ON KEY ISSUES OF CONCERN. THE MDC APPRECIATES OBASANJO'S INVOLVEMENT BUT EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT HE APPEARS TO HAVE ACCEPTED MUGABE'S PROMISES AT FACE VALUE. END SUMMARY.

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[1](#)2. (U) PRESIDENT OBASANJO AND HIS LARGE DELEGATION (WHICH INCLUDED FOREIGN MINISTER LAMIDO AND SPECIAL ENVOY ON ZIMBABWE CHIEF SHONEKAN) WAS MET AT HARARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT BY PRESIDENT MUGABE, INFORMATION MINISTER JONATHAN MOYO, AND A NUMBER OF OTHER RULING PARTY HEAVYWEIGHTS AT 8:00 P.M. ON JANUARY 20. ALSO IN ATTENDANCE WERE SOME 2,000 ZANU-PF SUPPORTERS, MANY WEARING T-SHIRTS WITH OBASANJO'S PICTURE ON THE FRONT, CHANTING PRO ZANU-PP SLOGANS AND CARRYING PLACARDS DENOUNCING THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, AMONG OTHERS.

MUGABE CONVERSATION

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[1](#)3. (C) ACCORDING TO MARTINS COBHAM, SENIOR COUNSELOR AT THE NIGERIAN HIGH COMMISSION, PRESIDENTS MUGABE AND OBASANJO HAD A TETE-A-TETE AFTER A STATE BANQUET IN THE VISITING PRESIDENT'S HONOR. LAMIDO AND SHONEKAN REPORTEDLY COOLED THEIR HEELS DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL DISCUSSION. COBHAM TOLD US HE UNDERSTOOD SECOND-HAND

THAT OBASANJO HAD STRESSED TO MUGABE THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THE ABUJA AGREEMENT ON TRACK, ENSURING A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR THE ELECTIONS, AND INVITING INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS. (COMMENT: SINCE COBHAM WAS NOT PRESENT IN THE ONE-ON-ONE MEETING, WE SUSPECT HE WAS BASING HIS READOUT TO US ON THE REMARKS MADE BY THE TWO LEADERS TO JOURNALISTS AFTER THEIR CONVERSATION. END COMMENT.)

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TSVANGIRAI

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14. (C) OBASANJO SUBSEQUENTLY MET WITH TSVANGIRAI AND MDC SHADOW FOREIGN MINISTER TENDAI BITI FROM 1:10 A.M. TO 2:25 A.M. ON JANUARY 21. BITI TOLD POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF THAT OBASANJO REPORTED THAT HE WAS MORE OPTIMISTIC AFTER HIS DISCUSSION WITH MUGABE. THE ZIMBABWEAN PRESIDENT, ACCORDING TO OBASANJO, HAD PROVIDED ASSURANCES THAT VIOLENCE WOULD BE STOPPED AND THAT INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS WOULD BE ALLOWED IN- BITI SAID HE AND TSVANGIRAI HAD DESCRIBED NUMEROUS PAST INSTANCES IN WHICH MUGABE HAS FAILED TO HONOR SIMILAR COMMITMENTS, AND THAT THEY STRONGLY ENCOURAGED OBASANJO TO JUDGE MUGABE ONLY BY HIS ACTIONS. OBASANJO SAID MUGABE HAD REJECTED OBASANJO'S SUGGESTION THAT HE MEET WITH TSVANGIRAI. OBASANJO ASKED TSVANGIRAI FOR ASSURANCES THAT THERE WOULD BE NO "VINDICTIVENESS" AGAINST MUGABE IF THE MDC WINS THE MARCH CLECTION. BITI SAID TSVANGIRAI HAD REPLIED THAT THE LAW WOULD BE

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	WHA-00	DS-00
	EAP-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	VCE-00	M-00	NSAE-00
	SSO-00	SS-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/002W
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O 221327Z JAN 02  
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0754  
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 HARARE 000200

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STATE FOR AF A/S KANSTEINER AND DAS BELLAMY

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SUBJECT: OBASANJO SHUTTLES TO ZIMBABWE, MEETS BOTH MUGABE AND TSVANGIRAI

ALLOWED

TO TAKE ITS COURSE, AND STRESSED THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VINDICTIVENESS AND THE RULE OF LAW. OVERALL, BITI EXPRESSED HIS "GRCAT DISAPPOINTMENT" WITH THE OBASANJO VISIT. ALTHOUGH THE NIGERIAN PRESIDENT IS GENUINELY TRYING TO HELP, ACCORDING TO BITI, HE APPEARS TO BE UNDERESTIMATING WHAT MUGABE IS CAPABLE OF.

15. (C) BITI CONFIRMED THAT OBASANJO HAD, IN A JANUARY 14 MEETING WITH TSVANGIRAI IN ABUJA, SAID HE WOULD URGE MUGABE TO STEP DOWN DURING THE HARARE VISIT. (NOTE: ACCORDING TO TSVANGIRAI'S SPECIAL ASSISTANT, GANDI MUDZINGWA, WHO ATTENDED THE MEETING IN ABUJA, OBASANJO HAD ASKED WHETHER THE MDC WOULD SUPPORT A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT SUPPORTING AN EXTENSION OF THE PRESIDENT'S MANDATE LONG ENOUGH TO ALLOW ARRANGEMENT OF MUGABE'S DEPARTURE.) BITI SAID OBASANJO DID NOT RAISE

THIS ISSUE IN HIS JANUARY 21 MEETING WITH HIM AND  
TSVANGIRAI.

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COMMENT

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16. (C) CLEARLY, OBASANJO BROKERED NO BREAKTHROUGHS  
DURING HIS BRIEF VISIT. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE,  
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HOWEVER, THAT HIS PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT ON ZIMBABWE IS  
POSITIVE, IF ONLY BECAUSE OBASANJO IS ONE OF THE FEW  
PEOPLE WITH INFLUENCE OVCR MUGABE. IF, AS REPORTED,  
THE NIGERIAN PRESIDENT FOCUSED HIS DISCUSSION WITH  
MUGABE ON VIOLENCE, ELECTORAL RULES AND OBSERVERS --  
INSTEAD OF ON LAND, AS THE GOZ WOULD HAVE PREFERRED --  
THE VISIT YIELDED SOME INCREMENTAL PROGRESS. HOWEVER,  
IF THERE IS ANY HOPE OF MITIGATING FURTHER POLITICAL  
AND ECONOMIC DAMAGE IN ZIMBABWE, OBASANJO WILL NEED TO  
RATCHET UP THE PRESSURE, BY MAKING IT CLEAR TO MUGABE  
THAT HE WILL BE JUDGED ON HIS ACTIONS, NOT HIS  
PROMISES. WE FOUND INTERESTING OBASANJO'S STATEMENT TO  
TSVANGIRAI IN ABUJA THAT HE PLANNED TO URGE MUGABE TO

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STEP DOWN, AN ISSUE HE EITHER DID NOT RAISE WITH HIS  
ZIMBABWEAN COUNTERPART OR DID NOT CHOOSE TO SHARE WITH  
TSVANGIRAI.

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